

Soldiers' Letters.

NORWALK, O., June 4th, 1881.

Editor National Tribune:

DEAR SIR: I have read in the May number of THE TRIBUNE the review, criticisms and amendments made by the G. H. L., to the bill which was introduced in the House of Representatives February 16th, 1880, asking that pensions be granted to certain Union soldiers and sailors of the late war of the rebellion, who were confined in so-called Confederate prisons. The bill referred to reads

WHEREAS, During the late rebellion many soldiers and sailors of the Federal army and navy, through the fortunes of war, became prisoners of war confined in so-called Confederate prisons, to the detriment and permanent injury of their health, but whose debility is of such a general and indefinable character as to exclude them from the benefits of existing pension laws; therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he hereby is, authorized and required to place upon the pension rolls of the United States, upon application and proof being made to the satisfaction of the department, all honorably discharged soldiers and sailors of the Federal army and navy who, during the late war, were captured and confined, during the period of six months or more, in any of the prisons or places commonly used for the confinement of prisoners by the so-called Confederate authorities during the late rebellion, and who are not now beneficiaries, nor entitled to become so under existing pension laws of the United States.

SEC. 2. That such pensions shall in such case begin from the date of the discharge of the soldier or sailor aforesaid from the military or naval service of the United States, and shall be at the rate of eight dollars per month in cases where the term of imprisonment shall have been more than six months and less than one year, and one dollar per month additional for each full month of such imprisonment in excess of one year, and that said pension shall be in addition to any pension that the said survivors of said Confederate military prisons may be now drawing or may hereafter draw for wounds received in the line of duty. And the said pensions shall be paid at the same time and in the same manner as other pensions are paid. Provided, that nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize the reduction or to prevent the increase of the pension of any person now receiving, or entitled to receive the benefits of existing pension laws.

G. H. L. claims, and very justly too, that the bill should include the commissioned officers who were confined in rebel prisons, also that the benefits of this bill should not be restricted to those whose term of imprisonment equaled or exceeded six months; and it is indeed true that this restriction would be a very unjust one, for the experience of a great many of the Union prisoners, as well as my own, has demonstrated most conclusively that the exposure, hardships and starvation we were compelled to undergo in those terrible death-pens, was so great that confinement in them for a much less period than six months, was sufficient to break down and undermine the health, and in a large majority of cases has been followed by years of suffering and permanent disability; and I think the element of time if considered at all, should not exceed one month.

The bill recommended by G. H. L. reads as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he hereby is, authorized and empowered to place upon the pension rolls of the United States, upon application and proof being made to the satisfaction of the department, all honorably discharged officers, soldiers and sailors of the United States army and navy who, during the late war, were captured and confined in any of the prisons or places commonly used for the confinement of prisoners, by the so-called Confederate authorities during the late rebellion.

That such pension shall in each case begin from the date of the passage of this act, and shall be at the rate of eight dollars per month and two dollars a day in one payment for the days they were confined in any Confederate military prison; and provided further, that this said survivors of said Confederate military prisons may be now drawing or may hereafter draw for wounds received in the line of duty, to be paid at the same time and in the same manner as other pensions are now paid.

Now, while this bill remedies most of the defects of the first, yet in one respect it would not be as favorable to many of its beneficiaries. I refer to that clause of the bill which provides that the pension shall in each case begin from the date of the passage of this act. The first bill provides that the pension shall in each case begin from the date of the discharge of the soldier or sailor from the military or naval service of the United States, &c.

Now, there are many of our soldiers who were prisoners who have not yet succeeded in getting a pension, although they have been disabled to a greater or less extent ever since they were discharged from the service, and there are others who have received a pension, but who under Bentley's rulings have not received more than four or perhaps six dollars a month. Now, certainly those who have been disabled during this time and whose disability is the result of their prison experience, are as justly entitled to a pension for the whole time since their discharge, as the wounded man, or the man who was in any way disabled while in the line of duty, but who was not so unfortunate as to be taken prisoner. In regard to that part of the last bill which provides for the payment of two dollars per day for each and every day's confinement in prison, I will say that it would take a number of millions of dollars to make this payment alone, and this fact would undoubtedly be used as an argument against the bill, and might be the means of killing it at the outset. And while two dollars a day would be a very small compensation for the suffering endured by some of our soldiers while in prison, yet it might be claimed that suffering and pain are the incidentals of a soldier's life, and that the wounded soldier might with equal propriety ask compensation at a certain rate per day during the time he was suffering acute pain from his wounds. This the Government does not grant; but it does grant a pension for the disability which is the result of these wounds and suffering; and in most cases this pension is paid from the date of discharge from the service. Is it not evident then, that the pension of the prisoner who is suffering from disability incurred while in the line of duty should also begin at the date of his discharge.

The following bill will, I think, remedy the defect of the first and second:

WHEREAS, During the late rebellion many officers, soldiers and sailors of the Union army and navy, through the fortunes of war, became prisoners of war, and were confined in so-called Confederate prisons, to the detriment and permanent injury of their health, but whose permanent injury of their health, but whose debility is of such a general and indefinable character as to exclude them from the benefits of existing pension laws; therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he hereby is, authorized and required to place upon the pension rolls of the United States, upon application and proof being made to the satisfaction of the department, all honorably discharged officers, soldiers and sailors of the Federal army and navy who, during the late war, were captured and confined during the period of one (1) month or more, in any of the prisons or places commonly used for the confinement of prisoners by the so-called Confederate authorities during the late rebellion.

SEC. 2. That such pension shall in each case begin from the date of the discharge of the officer, soldier or sailor aforesaid,

from the military service of the United States, and shall be at the rate of eight (8) dollars per month in cases where the term of imprisonment shall have been one month or more than one month and less than one year, and one (1) dollar per month additional for each full month of such imprisonment in excess of one year, and that said pension shall be in addition to any pension that the said survivors of said Confederate military prisons may be now drawing or may hereafter draw for wounds received in the line of duty. And the said pensions shall be paid at the same time and in the same manner as other pensions are paid. Provided, that nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize the reduction or to prevent the increase of the pension of any person now receiving, or entitled to receive the benefits of existing pension laws.

Yours respectfully,

J. C. P.

HOPEDALE, MASS., June 9, 1881.

National Tribune Co.

SIRS: I have seen considerable mention made of young soldiers in your paper. I cannot boast of being as young as some, but I think there are very few as young as myself who served as private thirty-seven months. I was born June 11, 1847; enlisted December 9, 1861; was in every battle of the regiment, with one exception. Was with General Banks on his Red River expedition, also at Port Hudson participated in two charges on those works. Was a member of the 8th New Hampshire Regiment, Co. A. Was fourteen years six months old at time of enlistment. Was in the hospital two weeks, and was never taken into an ambulance but once, and that for a short distance. Yours respectfully,

EUGENE CURTICE.

HENRIETTA, VT., June 2, 1881.

MR. EDITOR: Your paper has a very large circulation among the soldiers of the country, and I desire to make an appeal to them. Fellow-soldiers, it is now sixteen years since the war closed, and yet we are continually denied our rights. Why is it that the Equalization Bounty Bill, the bill granting us land warrants, the bill giving pensions to those who suffered in prisons, the Pension Court Bill, and others that might be named, have not passed? Why is it that Mr. Bentley is still retained as Commissioner of Pensions? The reason to me is evident. We are not true to each other. We do not look to the record of the men for whom we vote. Until this is done we cannot secure our rights. We ought to work together as a band of brothers to secure our ends. These are words I want to sink deep into the hearts of all ex-soldiers. Yours truly,

ARMSTRONG O'HARA.

Andersonville.

No soldier who served in a rebel prison will ever forget how cruel war is, and how inhuman human beings can make themselves. No one who served in Andersonville will forget the horrors of the living death that he was suffering daily in that spot that is darker than any other in the southern page of our war history.

Many persons are anxious to know how the "old pen" looks now; and the following information about its present condition will be read with interest by both soldiers and others:

Anderson is the name of a station on the South-western railroad about sixty miles from Macon. It is nothing but a railroad station, and the only thing that characterizes the spot is the immense Union cemetery of some twenty acres, over which floats the star-spangled banner. The cemetery is constructed on the spot where the prisoners were buried, and the trenches were dug with such precision and regularity that the soldiers were not generally disturbed, but allowed to remain as their comrades interred them, working under the fixed bayonets of the Georgia home-guard.

The cemetery is surrounded by a stout brick wall, with an iron gate, and is under the supervision of a superintendent, who lives on the ground. It is a plain spot. There is not much attempt made to ornament this city of our martyred dead. It would take a great deal of even such influence as plants and flowers possess to dispel the melancholy memories that haunt this hill in the pine woods of south Georgia.

Southerners shun the spot, but the cemetery is much visited by northern travelers, and the register in the superintendent's lodge contains many strange inscriptions besides the names of the visitors. One lady asks forgiveness of God for the murder of her brother, who sleeps in the cemetery.

Occasionally a man who was in the stockade turns up among the visitors. These men, whatever their natural temper, the superintendent says, can almost be distinguished by the effects of fear, dread and vivid recollection which come back like a shock into their faces as they again stand on the now quiet and sunlit scene of their experiences.

In the cemetery the ground is of a general level, and the graves of the known and unknown, properly separated, are arranged in rows, closely laid, as far as the eye can reach.

There are actually buried on this elevation 15,715 men. The soldier whose identity was preserved by his comrades is marked in his resting-place by a white marble stone rising eighteen inches above the level of the ground. A square marble block with the word "Unknown," on it is repeated about one thousand times in the cemetery.

Part of the stockade is still standing. There were two rows of trees—one inside the other. The outer row has fallen down, save for a few posts here and there, but a large part of the inner wall still stands. Trees have grown up around the old pen, and the thick growth of underbrush now covers the site of the prison.

No traces of the famous brook that ran through the stockade remain, nor of the wonderful well dug by the prisoners. It is all now a mild and peaceful section of country.

Many of the soldiers in the cemetery have handsome headstones lifted to their memory by friends in the North, and efforts are frequently made to have certain graves "kept green" with flowers.

An old farmer in Massachusetts had been much annoyed by the eccentricities of his hired hand. One morning on going out to the barn he found that his hired man had hung himself. Somewhat surprised, the old man ejaculated: "Well, well! What on airth will that fellow do next?"

Correspondents' Column.

We are obliged to answer certain inquiries of the same nature in each issue of our paper. While we cheerfully furnish information to subscribers, in this column, we suggest that much labor, time and expense may be saved both to ourselves and to our correspondents, if the latter and other subscribers would keep a file of the paper. They could then, at any time, turn to the file and probably find the very inquiry answered about which they would have written to us. We trust that each and every subscriber will profit by this suggestion.

L. T. V., DES MOINES, IOWA.—George B. Loring, of Massachusetts, has been recently appointed and confirmed as Commissioner of Agriculture, in place of Mr. Le Duc.

R. M., PITTSBURGH, PA.—We do not furnish a sample copy of any paper with which we club. Send a postal card asking for it to the publisher of the paper you wish—he will probably forward it to you.

C. T. W., BURLINGTON, IOWA.—We cannot inform you as to the names of States having organizations known as "National Guards."

G. L., DETROIT, MICH.—You are right, and consequently your friend is wrong. Gettysburg was undoubtedly the greatest battle of the war.

S. M., SPRINGFIELD, MASS.—We believe there never was a fight with rebel troops in Illinois. Morgan's men were in Indiana and Ohio.

J. M. C., SYRACUSE, N. Y.—Any information with reference to our National Cemeteries will be given by addressing Quartermaster's Department U. S. Army, Washington, D. C.

E. S., ALBANY, N. Y.—See our last number, (which we send you) in which you will find Mr. Keller's bill.

T. W., CAMDEN, N. J.—Camp Butler, Illinois, was located some eight or ten miles from Springfield. It was a depot for recruits and rebel prisoners.

J. R. C., WILLIAMSPORT, PA.—See last page of our paper with regard to premiums for clubs. We send you a copy.

L. F., CONCORD, N. H.—We cannot promise, in advance, to publish any notice—it must first be examined.

J. B., TRENTON, N. J.—The information you seek will be found in another part of our paper, a copy of which we send you.

H. C. W., BELLEVILLE, ILL.—The Soldiers' Home, near this city, is only intended for soldiers who have been in the Regular Army.

T. M. J., SHERBOGAN, WIS.—The rate of pension for a disability incapacitating for any manual labor was, up to June 6, 1866, \$8 a month; from that date to June 4, 1872, it was \$20 a month; and from the last date, and at present, \$24 a month. The phrase "any manual labor," which occurs in the law, is construed to include the lighter kinds of labor requiring education and skill.

O. M., HARTFORD, CONN.—A homestead may be located by an ex-soldier or sailor through an agent, but at the expiration of six months the principal himself must locate and commence cultivation; otherwise all claim to the tract will be forfeited.

D. J. W., HANNAH, MO.—The Equalization Bounty Bill proposes to grant a bounty of eight and one-third dollars a month for each month of actual service, deducting all United States bounty already received. Multiply \$4 by the number of months you served, and from the product subtract the amount of bounty you have received—the remainder, if any, will show you the amount to which you will be entitled if the said bill becomes a law.

G. W. O., RICHFIELD, MICH.—Question. Does the Commissioner of Pensions allow pensions without the claimant being examined by a physician recognized by the Government?—Answer. No, sir.

J. H. E., CLARENDON, MICH.—Claims are not allowed in rotation. For instance, claim No. 203,604 may be allowed before claim No. 194,293.

D. N., PITTSFIELD, MASS.—Q. What is meant by "Additional Homesteads" under section 2306 of the Revised Statutes?—A. An "Additional Homestead," under section 2306 Revised Statutes, is made and allowed in cases where a person who was a soldier in the rebellion for not less than ninety days, and who, having been honorably discharged, did, on and before June 22, 1864, make a homestead for less than 160 acres. Under this section 2306 he is allowed to make an additional entry for the amount of difference between the area of the original homestead and 160 acres. If he does not choose to make the entry in person and at once, he can have a certificate of his right made by the General Land Office, this city, and the paper covered by the certificate is called an "Approved Additional Homestead Right."

R. W., PHILADELPHIA, PA.—You should address the Surgeon-General of the Army, Washington, D. C., in regard to the matter referred to in your letter.

N. F. E., QUINCY, ILL.—The Government furnishes headstones for the graves of all soldiers who died during or since the late war, upon application for same by relatives or friends. Address the Quartermaster-General of the Army, this city.

G. L. S., PORTLAND, MAINE.—The pension granted to a discharged soldier during his lifetime cannot be increased after his death.

N. W. J., ST. PAUL, MINN.—One commissioned officer or two enlisted men are required in a pension claim to corroborate claimant's statement as to the time when, places where, and circumstances under which the alleged disability was contracted.

T. L. V., NASHVILLE, TENN.—Claims for property taken by the United States Army, in States not in insurrection during the late war, if filed prior to January 1, 1880, can be prosecuted and collected upon the necessary proof being adduced.

J. M., MANCHESTER, N. H.—We cannot advise or suggest to ex-soldiers and sailors in what portion of the United States they will find the most desirable lands on which to locate their homesteads, but we advise them to write to the Commissioner of the General Land Office here and he will send all who seek information on the subject a pamphlet telling all about our public lands.

D. R. C., BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY.—Up to a recent date a deserter at large from the volunteer service could obtain a dishonorable discharge, and by thus having his military record completed, obtain a pension if entitled thereto; but the Secretary of War Ramsey, just before retiring from the War Office, issued an order to the effect that no further discharges in such cases should be issued. The Commissioner of Pensions has now the matter of allowing pension in this class of cases under consideration, and we will make known his decision when rendered. The above refers to those who have never received a final discharge. We would, however, advise all such to apply, as they will no doubt eventually have title.

Soldiers who Lost Horses.

In answer to very many queries which continue to come to us, especially from ex-soldiers who were in the western cavalry service, we will again state that the law granting pay for horses lost in the United States service, from causes incident to the war, expired by limitation December 31, 1875. Quite a number of bills have been introduced since to extend the time within which such claims may be filed and audited, and while there has been no particular opposition to so just a measure, yet the bills have failed through a lack of interest on the part of Senators and Representatives having them in charge, and other reasons. Several bills of this nature were introduced in the last Congress, which expired March 4, 1881, and one of them passed the Senate, but so late in the session as to render its passage by the House of Representatives impracticable. There is every reason, however, to hope that the bill will become a law during the session of Congress beginning next December, and all having claims of this character should bring them before the proper department through an experienced claims attorney without delay, as they will be taken up in the order of their filing. (See advertisement on last page.)